

Everyone took a moment to recover from my sudden attempt to change the topic, wanting to focus on the potential to do actual magic. Sally seemed to at least partially pick up on my intent as she energetically started bouncing over the table.

"Well, we will get a sort of... Obelisk, that I can move around the bastion as long as we aren't under attack or anything. By placing your hand on it, you will be able to pick one out of a handful of minor spells," The blue crystal construct explained. "You can switch them at any time, but your three charges only regenerate at midnight."

"Depending on what kind of spells we get, that seems like the obvious choice." I pointed out, looking around the group. "It would be nice to finally have something interesting, something we could all use in a pinch."

"What kind of spells do we get access to?" Jessicas asked pointedly. "Not much point if we all just get a flashlight spell."

"Lumos!" Molly shouted before covering her mouth and blushing.

Jason looked up at the young girl and, for the first time since he had arrived, smiled just a tiny bit.

"Nox," He whispered, getting a wide-eyed stare from Molly in return, both of them soon smiling.

I couldn't help but chuckle at the adorable interaction, turning back to look at Sally, who had stopped when Molly shouted.

"No, there's no light spell, thankfully. You would have multiple options. There is a low-level electric blast, a close-range bramble spell, a fire blast, a defensive barrier spell, and a low-level healing spell," Sally responded. "All of them are at the basic level of spells, but I believe they will still be useful."

"I think this is a no-brainer at this point," I said, looking around at the nods of agreement. "Unless someone disagrees?"

"I think you can imagine my opinion of a healing spell," Alissa pointed out. "Even if it's nothing special, even minor healing adds up, right?"

"I think you should take the minor personal buff that only benefits you in a small way, Aiden," Roger said sarcastically. "Just pick the spells already."

"Fair enough," I said with a snort of amusement, looking back to my floating partner. "Alright, Sally, go ahead and give us some magic."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure."

"Alright! Commencing Reality Adjustment!"

A nearly imperceptible shiver passed over all of us, flowing over the entire bastion. It didn't change anything as far as I could see, despite everyone looking down at their hands.

"Now you'll need to pick where I put the Obelisk, Aiden," Sally said happily.

"Is there any chance it could get damaged?"

"Yes, but then I would just rebuild it," She assured me. "It's part of the bastion on a fundamental level. Technically... I suppose I could make it appear halfway inside a wall, so it was fused to the bastion and not free-standing."

"I like the sounds of that. Why don't you put it over-"

I started to gesture to the wall by the entrance, but Alissa slapped my arm.

"Absolutely not. Something like this belongs somewhere that Sally can lock up in case we want to keep certain people from using it," She said, her face pointing at me, but her eyes flicking down to Molly, who was still leaning on her. "Not saying we would have to, but it would be nice to be able to restrict people to, say, the healing spell and nothing else."

"Fair point. Sally, put it near the door main door of the supply room, fused to the wall." I said. "Make it as shallow to the wall as possible as well. I have a feeling that room will be filling up pretty soon."

"Sounds good!" she responded before bouncing in the air once. "Obelisk placed! Would you like to take a look?"

We quickly made our way down into the supply room, stopping by the large main door. On its left side was indeed an obelisk. It was made almost entirely from a polished deep black stone and was set into the wall, like it had been cut vertically in half and fused on. There were four symbols carved into the stone and highlighted by some sort of goldish material inlay. The first was a single lightning bolt, followed by a first aid plus sign, a shield, a single flame, and a patch of tangled thorny vines.

I stepped closer, looking the black stone up and down. I was tempted to reach out and touch it, only to pause and look over at Sally.

"How does this work?" I asked. "I'm not gonna get laid on my ass by this, am I?"

"Oh, no. The first time you use the Obelisk, you're going to get a tattoo of sorts around your dominant arm. It should be simple and mark out how many charges you have. It might sting a bit," She explained. "Whatever symbol you put your hand over is what you get the first time."

"Right, gotcha."

I reached out again and put my hand on the snowflake, pressing my palm on the carving. For a moment, nothing happened. The cool stone slowly heated up from my body temperature as I held it there. Suddenly, just when I was going to pull back and complain a searing pain gripped my arm. I jerked instinctually away from the pain, but my hand was stuck against the now-warm stone. I could feel the burning spread around my forearm, feeling more like a brand than a tattoo, not that I had anything to compare it to. After a second, the pain cut off, and I could yank my arm off the stone face. I flicked my hand, wincing at the movement, before rolling up my sleeves. There, on my forearm, was a solid black band, looking every bit like a simple tattoo. On the inside face of the tattoo, along my inner forearm, there was a rounded rectangular blank space inside the thick band, with three thick tally marks inside.

Still rubbing the tattoo, I pushed open the thick, heavy-duty doors that led out onto the bastion's ramparts, walking to the edge as everyone followed behind me. I reached the edge before jabbing out with my hand, my index and middling finger pointing forward together.

"Zap!" I called out, and a single spark of electricity leaped out from my two fingers and raced into the empty air, moving like a thin bolt of lightning before eventually sputtering out about forty or fifty feet away.

I couldn't help but chuckle, and for a moment, I was about to do it again when I paused, shaking my head.

"Four more people should try the other ones, so we can see what they are like," I said "But no-one wastes their spells. Once we see them all, we are all going to change to the healing spell. If we combine our spells into one person, we might be able to get everyone up to a hundred percent. We can experiment a bit over the next few days, but healing our people comes first."

"Let's start by testing the actual spell first," Alissa said, limping back inside and fearlessly putting her palm against the first aid symbol carved into the black stone. "Fuuccckk. That's a bit more than a sting, Sally."

The floating crystal stayed silent as Alissa walked to Roger and put her hand on his shoulder. He looked surprised when she did, but before he could say anything, she cast the spell, her hand glowing green, motes of green light floating around before sinking into Rogers's shoulder.

"Huh... guess you don't need to say anything," I mumbled, getting a raised eyebrow from the nurse.

"How do you feel?" She asked, looking back to the young adult, who was shifting uncomfortably. "Better?"

"The same... maybe a bit better?" He said, looking conflicted. "Everything still hurts, but maybe a bit less? I don't know, if it worked, it wasn't very much."

Alissa's hand glowed again, the same green energy appearing and sinking into his shoulder.

"I... I can feel the difference now, I think," Roger said, moving his body around, still wincing a bit. "It's not a lot... barely anything, but it's there."

"Even if it's small, that is still amazing," I assured him. "If we run into trouble, we can stabilize someone enough to get them back here, or if someone is really injured, we could risk using our spells for a while and bring them back to a hundred percent in just a couple of days."

"And it won't stop there," Alissa added. "Eventually, we are hoping to make this place self-sufficient. That's a lot of people hanging out at the bastion with no reason to use their spells. We could set up a small healing ward where the people building, farming, or working at the bastion can heal people."

"Even the people who would need their spells could wait until just before midnight, switch their spells to healing, and then use up their slots," I pointed out. "Right now, the spell will speed up healing, but a few more groups and healing time will be down to a day."

"And I can happily retire," Alissa smirked, shaking her head after a moment. "This is good, great even. Let's get back to seeing the other spells. I think it's far past time that Amelia wakes up."

Somehow, through all this talk of healing, Jessica hadn't put together the fact that her sister might be getting better a bit sooner than they had anticipated. She immediately ran back inside the room, slapped her palm on the stone, and gritted her teeth. The second her tattoo appeared and her hand was freed, she sprinted away, disappearing up the stairs.

"...yeah, let's get this done quickly. We can experiment later."

George volunteered to test out the fire blast spell, bearing the tattoo application with nothing but a pained grunt, before firing it off the side of the bastion. The spell was a blast of fiery energy, surging forward in a short cone. The heat was mediocre and over in a split second. It was clearly hot enough to do *some* damage, I certainly wouldn't want to be hit by it.

Unfortunately, I had a feeling it would be more useful as a way to scare off or startle attacking monsters rather than damage them outright. We obviously couldn't test out how dangerous it was quite yet, but I couldn't imagine something just ignoring getting blasted in the face by fire, even if it didn't do any severe damage, or any damage for that matter.

Rather than have everyone test out a different spell, George simply switched his spell to the bramble spell next, casting it on the wide walkway of the parapet. He cast the spell about ten feet away, his palm and arm glowing brown, the energy swirling out and disappearing. After a split second, a dozen or so square feet of the stone structure was suddenly covered with knee-high brambles. It was dense, and the thorns were, at minimum, an inch long. I tried to tear them apart by grabbing a non-thorny part and failed to budge or break them. About a minute after he cast the spell, the bramble disappeared, leaving no trace and no damage behind.

The last spell was the defensive spell, which cast a slightly reflective film around George when he used it. It was not the ablative energy barrier that I had been hoping for, but rather seemed to reduce the impact of an attack. We didn't test it with anything sharp, but it reduced a solid punch to George's shoulder to a much more reasonable blow. It did fade after a minute, however, and Sally warned us that based on other similar effects she had seen, it was likely to have a limit to how much damage it could reduce before failing.

Once we were done exploring the basics of our latest jump reward, everyone else either got their tattoos or shifted their current one to healing. Even Molly and Jason got theirs after, despite Alissa kindly explaining that they didn't have to if they didn't want to. They both bravely put their hands on the stone carving of the healing spell. By the time their tattoo was done, they were both crying, but they were also ready to help.

We made our way up to the second floor, opening the door to Jessica and Amelia's room. Jessica was already waiting for us, holding her older sister's hand as she sat on a chair beside her bed. She was clearly nervous, worried that for some reason, her sister wouldn't wake up.

One by one, we used our new ability, green energy sinking into the still-unconscious woman. Eventually, after everyone but myself had used their spell charges, her eyes started to flutter. I took her hand and cast both of my charges, making sure she would be okay before guiding everyone else out of the room save Alissa, Molly, and Jessica. I closed the door just as she was waking up, the still-pale woman stirring and trying to shift in her bed. The first thing I did after the door was shut was call for Sally.

"Sally? Do I have to warn you that shocking someone who was unconscious for so long would be a bad idea?" I asked, the projection appearing in front of me. "Or have you learned your lesson?"

"I won't scare her, Aiden," She responded, focusing on me as everyone else dispersed throughout the bastion. "Promise."

"Thank you, I don't think Jessica would forgive you if you did," I pointed out, the projection bouncing in place.

Rather than going downstairs, I went up to where Roger had gone and where Barry was. When I arrived, Barry was lying in bed, and Roger was sitting in a chair beside him, explaining what we had unlocked.

"So Ms. Wensor woke up?" Barry asked, looking at Roger with wide eyes, his excited nature just barely shining through his worn-out state. "That's fantastic! Now, maybe Jessica can get some sleep."

"She's been struggling to sleep?" I asked, leaning against the bed next to Barry's

"Yeah, I've caught her a few times just standing out on the bastion walkway," Barry admitted. "That means you'll be healed too soon, Roger."

"Oh yeah, very excited," Roger said with a blank look. "Very excited to start working again, putting my life at risk running around a monster-infested town."

"Nobody is going to force you to go out, Roger. Not everyone needs to be a fighter," I assured him. "You just can't freeload. Find something constructive to do and stick with it."

"Roger is good with his hands," Barry pointed out. "If you don't want to fight, Roger, you can always work as a builder or a crafter."

We chatted for a while, the topics quickly moving away from the heavy responsibilities we had to bear and more about what the next few days would look like. Eventually, I headed down the stairs, letting Barry rest, and Roger have some time to think by himself. I was halfway down the stairs when Sally appeared beside me.

"Aiden, Alissa is calling me to get you," She said. "Amelia wants to meet you and talk about what is going on."

"Thanks, Sally, let's go say hello."